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ABSTRACT

The relationship of college unions and student personnel services to religious groups on campus is examined in this two part article. In part one, attention is focused on the purposes of the college union, important concepts in the nation's religious history, and actions of the courts. It is noted that legal actions and court cases have focused on the debate over the relationship between campus religious groups and the higher education institutions of which these groups are a part. Court decisions suggest that religious programs advocating a particular religion or religion in general, when sponsored by a student government, union, or other official entity, should be avoided. However, it is legal to sponsor programs that examine values and in which religious lifestyles are compared and contrasted, as long as the religious lifestyles portrayed are only representative and not encouraged. Also, forced participation in religious exercises at private universities may constitute a denial of freedom of exercise. As long as universities treat student groups equally regarding meeting space and support, they are in compliance with court rulings. Part two of the article focuses on demands placed on the student union by religious groups and the union's responses. Issues that unions may face include: student demands to support a boycott (e.g., lettuce and grape boycotts), and the nature and degree of proselytizing and evangelizing that religious groups can engage in when using the student union. In considering the educative role of student activities and college union departments, active partnerships may be formed with the chaplain, campus ministry, and local clergy in developing ways to present basic information about religion, and tactics and dangers associated with aggressive cults and sects. Referral networks for counseling on religious issues and advisory groups to deal with religious concepts may also be formed cooperatively. It is suggested that while the college union is not engaged in ministry, per se, it can offer the space and environment for discussions of sensitive human issues. (SW)

Religious uses of the college union Whose temple is it?

Part One

This two-part series examines the relationship of college unions and student personnel services to religious groups on campus. Part one focuses on the purposes of the college union, discusses some of the important concepts in our nation's history, and reviews the actions of the courts. In the December issue, part two of this series will present practical situations and discuss the implications of various actions.

David E. Johnson and Stephen J. Nelson

As the 1960s drew to a close and the 1970s began, political and social activism on the campus subsided. This era caused its own degree of consternation and polarization for college administrators and friction between those administrators and students. In the vacuum which was created, the role of religious groups on the campus and their utilization of college and university facilities and college unions in particular became a nettlesome concern. Some groups—such as the Moonies, Children of God, and Hare Krishna—had recently hatched on the religious scene, but other sects were more rooted in mainline religious faith systems and structures. Many reflected a synthesis of a variety of religious experiences and cultures. In addition, groups such as the IntersVarsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, Fellowship of Christian Athletes and other evangelical Christian organizations experienced a degree of rebirth as political activism waned.

Whether the religious groups which have arisen in the 1970s and early 1980s thrive best in times when political and social consciousness is of less concern is conjecturable. There may be no clear or satisfactory answer to the question of why these groups have appeared at this time on college and university campuses. One thing which is certain is that the nation has always experienced, and in fact was in large measure founded upon, pluralism. In recent decades, our so-

ciety has become more pluralistic, a condition further complicated by an increasing secularization of our culture. This situation has led some people to affirm the need for religious faith systems and organizations on which they can depend in the face of collapsing social supports and institutions. Among other things, religion has been an avenue for people to understand the world around them, how and where their own lives fit, the meaning and purpose of life, and how they deal with their own finitude and mortality. For the believer, there is also the potential communion with God and fellowship with others of like mind.

Although not every religious group on campus or elsewhere meets all of the needs all of the time, they do tend to attract those who find a marriage of their own particular needs with what the group has to offer. If anything, the 1960s created a climate of seemingly unanswerable questions. Religious groups offer answers as a way out of the abyss. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that some college students seek these answers and that such groups have proliferated on campuses in the last 10 to 15 years. It is neither an accident nor a conspiracy, but more a result of the confluence of historical events and human needs.

Students come to college for myriad reasons. Learning job skills and obtaining a well-rounded education are two obvious ones. Just as im-

portantly, they come to examine their lives, the lives of others, and their roles in society. Unions, as the "living rooms" of campus striving to make "free time activity a cooperative factor in education," have long recognized these needs. Indeed, our history dates back to early debate societies, the forerunners of today's multifaceted unions. We constantly see to the social and recreational needs of our campuses, but how much effort do we invest in the spiritual lives of our constituents?

Alexander Astin's longitudinal study described in his book *Four Critical Years* (1977) denotes a clear pattern with regard to religious preference: the number of students with a conventional religious preference (Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Jewish) declines substantially during the college years while the percentage with no religious preference shows a corresponding increase. These changes occur over the years and are based on a variety of situations, including living arrangements, parents' beliefs, and geographic location.

It is not clear from Astin's study whether the results are due to maturation or the impact of college. However, Astin notes that "while the results suggest that college attendance contributes to the secularization of students, they also indicate that the quality of collegiate experience can be critical in determining how that experience affects the students' values and beliefs" (p. 62).

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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This article attempts to provide guidance to those in the administration of student personnel services in general and student activities and college unions in particular for facing the issues raised by religious organizations on campus. To do so, it is important that we reflect on the purposes of the college union, re-examine some of the important and often misunderstood concepts in our nation's religious history, and review the actions of our courts. Having done so, we will be able to think through how we might better relate to religious groups and organizations on our respective campuses. Our immediate judgment may be stimulated by what we perceive to be excesses and a lack of tolerance for the opinions of others. The challenge is for us to base our response on the liberal mindedness implicit in the traditions of higher education and the philosophy and statements of purpose of who we are as educators and student personnel administrators.

Role of activities and union

In pondering our relationship to religious groups on campus, it is important to consider in particular the role of cocurricular activities and the college union. Cocurricular activities are an instrumental part of the overall educational experience at the college and university level. These activities range from athletics at both the intercollegiate and intramural levels to myriad clubs and organizations found on any campus. They present a wide range of opportunities for students to learn outside of the classroom, to pursue special interests, and to work together with others. Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list; the activities should be broadly reflective of the diversity of the campus population and its interests. Such diversity is one way to measure the vitality of any given community, college or otherwise.

The college union, as reflected in the Statement of Purpose adopted by the Association of College Unions-International, is, among other things, "the community center of the college" and the "living room" or "hearthstone" of the institution. Implicitly and explicitly, the Statement of Purpose offers the notion that the union is for all members of the college community and that it is reflective of diversity in its ability to support self-initiative, self-realization, and self-awareness. Extending the comprehensiveness of this Statement of Purpose and its imagery, one could infer that the college union is a neutral

space. The union is, in theory and practice, something with which all members of the college community should be able to identify. The union, in effect, becomes a sanctuary, a safe haven or a place of refuge. The union must be able to integrate the richest diversity of the community of which it is a part while at the same time attempting to play a unifying egalitarian and educative role. It is important to note that the union itself has a creed. We must be true to this creed and enlighten educational philosophy and support them with integrity.

American religious history

In addition to reflecting on our professional roots, we must also understand American religious history. The issue of religious organizations on the campus is set against the backdrop of America's experimentation in and experience with religious freedom and what is considered to be the separation of church and state. Sydney Mead describes the American situation as

the story of how the outcast groups—Jews, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Quakers, and others—gained first the privilege to exist, then toleration of their public expressions under restrictions imposed by the established churches, then complete equality and freedom under the Civil Law. Religiously, then, what was unique about this American—this 'new man' after 1787—was his practice of religious freedom. (1963, p. 3)

By taking a somewhat closer, albeit still superficial, look at the issues of religious freedom and separation of church and state, we may gain a better sense of how we should relate to religious groups in our midst.

Religious freedom is a concept which has become associated with the American experience almost as if it had somehow been preordained. In fact, it is a concept formulated out of circumstances and necessity and derived from the experience of the first 200 years following the arrival of the early European colonists. When we think of religious freedom, we are drawn to the commonly known fact that many who settled the New World were fleeing religious persecution in their home countries. Quickly, paradoxes developed as those who had fled a lack of religious toleration often became intolerant of others. This can be seen in the eviction of Roger Williams from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the scandalous allegations of witchcraft aimed at Ann Hutchinson for her explorations and talk about spiritual communion with God.

In the latter portion of the 18th

century, the nation's founding fathers began to articulate and codify principles and laws which led to documents such as the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the governing documents of the colonies on their way to becoming states. Many of these founders, men such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin, were not what one would call regular churchgoers nor were they strongly affiliated with the religious denominations of their day. They were deists and their assumptions about religious freedom grew out of that context. In summarizing Thomas Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia (1798)" and James Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance on the Religious Rights of Man," Mead states that the concept of religious freedom

meant that each individual was to be left free to make up his own mind about religion; he was to have liberty to express his opinion freely and to seek to persuade others in his view; he was to suffer no deprivations or penalties, civil or otherwise as a result; and he was not to be forced to contribute to the support of any ecclesiastical institution even to one in which he believed. (1963, p. 57)

Religious freedom, then, was part of a general concept of freedom important to the earliest settlers of the New World. By supporting religious freedom, the founders ensured that a state church would not exist in this new nation. A climate, where religious freedom existed and a state church could not, enabled the denominations to proliferate as they wished. The state could then move into a position of predominance in the absence of competition from any one church or combination of churches such as had been the case in many of the European countries (the Episcopalians in England, the Lutherans in Germany).

In the minds of the founders, the boundary of this religious freedom was that it should not interfere with the public welfare. In other words, individual religious believers were free to practice as they desired. Such freedom resulted in a diversity of religious groups with no one religious group having any particular authority or established status over another.

The issue of the separation of church and state is essentially a spin-off of the concept of religious freedom. First articulated by Thomas Jefferson, the concept of separation of church and state reached its fruition in the First Amendment which, among other things, is designed to prevent the government from estab-

lishing any religion and from interfering with the practice of religion. The Amendment supports religious freedom and reflects the desire of the young government to keep from imitating its heritage left on the other side of the sea. The expectation was that the various denominations would inculcate basic values and the ideals of a democracy. In reality and practice, the religious diversity produced a lack of national unity which had to be faced.

The response to this dilemma was the institution of a public school system. Public schools took on the role of establishing unity and educating the populace about democracy and its basic moral principles. It is no accident that the American flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, and prayer have been a part of this education. Though the state has not established a church *per se*, it has used an institution, the public schools, to accomplish many of the same ends. This becomes even more ironic when we realize that it has been the public institutions of higher education which have concluded historically—based on their understanding of the separation of church and state concept—that they must keep religious groups and activities off of their property.

The American nation experimented with religious freedom, permitting it to exist as long as the public welfare was in no way harmed or jeopardized. The state set the ground rules for the experiment and for the manner in which it was to be carried out. And in the absence of a central unifying religious body, the state assumed—primarily through the system of public education—the role of advancing the common principles of its own creed and the essential tenets of democracy.

Review of court decisions

Legal actions and court cases, especially in recent years, have focused on the debate over the relationship between campus religious groups and the higher education institutions of which these groups are a part. The court cases themselves are an outgrowth of the attention and concerns surrounding the issue. At the same time, as is often the case, the legal proceedings have stirred their own round of discussion and comment. A review of this record is important to our understanding of this issue and so it is to that to which we now turn our attention, beginning with a brief historical perspective.

Although religion was a dom-

inant factor of student life in the early days of the United States, that trend has, like most, shown the pendulum effects of history. By the late 18th century, the impact of the American and French revolutions had drastically changed the religious traditions of college life (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976). Students who showed signs of Christian orthodoxy were ridiculed, and it became fashionable to scoff at formal religion as superstition and to form rationalist clubs, led by students who took as their nicknames "Voltaire" or "Rousseau" (p. 43).

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By the early 19th century, however, colleges became the breeding ground for fervent religious revivals, and numerous Christian associations were formed. As late as the start of the American Civil War, the following rule was in effect at Yale: "If any student shall profess or endeavor to propagate a disbelief in the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and shall persist therein after admonition, he shall no longer be a member of the College" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976, p. 43).

Fluctuations in religious practice have been with us as long as colleges have. While in the 1970s it was commonplace to see Transcendental Meditation lecture posters all over campus and Hare Krishnas on the quad and in the union, in the 1980s we often see fundamentalist organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship holding meetings and services. Interfaith offices or religious councils are becoming more politically powerful on campuses, and demands are placed on us as a group to aid these organizations in the propagation of their faiths.

How do these religiously oriented groups differ administratively from other student organizations such as the Ski Club? Realistically, they don't. The only differences between the Ski Club and the Students for Christ are their purposes. While one encourages us to "think snow," the other encourages us to "think Jesus." These are certainly fundamen-

tal differences, but administratively they are equal.

In fact, this is currently the law of the land. In December 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Widmar v. Vincent* that once a university creates an open forum to student groups as a whole, it opens it to each. Universities may not deny certain groups access without a justifiable reason such as state security (Wilson & Olswang, 1983). The *Widmar* decision is, however, only the latest chapter in recent court decisions limiting

If the answer is no to all of these, the university has no recourse but to allow the group to conduct its business (Blimling, 1981). It may, however, formulate "reasonable regulations with respect to the time, the place, and manner in which student groups conduct their speech-related activities" (Healy, pp. 192-193).

"Speech-related activities" include debate societies, protests, Stamp Club meetings, and religious exercises. In 1975 the Supreme Court of Delaware decided that the University of Delaware could not deny space for worship services (*Delaware v. Keegan*). In the case, left intact by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Delaware tribunal found that the no-religion policy would have "both the purpose and effect of impeding the observance of religion and this constitutes a legal burden on the students' Constitutional rights to freely exercise their religion . . . Neutrality is a safe harbor . . ." (*Delaware v. Keegan*). In this ruling, the Delaware court extended the definition of "speech related activities" established in *Healy v. James* to include practices.

The most recent case affecting us all is the *Widmar* case noted earlier. In it, a Christian group called Cornerstone was denied use of the University of Missouri at Kansas City facilities because it utilized worship in its meetings. The group had held meetings in the union for five years, but the University withheld further permission when Cornerstone's practices changed noticeably. In a commentary on the case, *Widmar* noted that the typical Cornerstone meeting included: (1) the offering of prayers; (2) the singing of hymns in praise and thanksgiving; (3) the public reading of scripture for inspirational as opposed to literary purposes; (4) the sharing of personal views and experiences (in relation to God) by various persons; (5) an exposition of, and commentary on, passages of the Bible by one or more persons for the purpose of teaching practical biblical principles; and (6) an invitation to the interested to meet for personal discussion (*Widmar & Ayres*, 1983, p. 8).

After a series of cases, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the University, requiring it to adopt an "equal access" policy which would open facilities to all student groups with no restrictions on activities, except for state security. Although the University argued that providing rooms built with state funds for worship would benefit Cornerstone and thus ad-

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a university's power of exclusion to religious groups.

For several years, standard practice for public institutions was to exclude all practice of religion in university facilities other than in strict classroom studies. Such policy was often the outgrowth of a 1948 U.S. Supreme Court decision which indicated that the use of public buildings or personnel for religious practices constituted unconstitutional aid to religions (*McCullum v. Board of Education*).

The force of this decision was modified, however, by later "freedom of speech" decisions, including the famous *Healy v. James* decision of 1972. The *Healy* case involved an attempt by students at Central Connecticut State College to organize a local chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society. The Court held for the students in this case, affirming the students' right to associate to promote issues of common interest (Blimling, 1981). "First amendment rights should (not) apply with less force on college campuses than in the community at large," stated the Court, noting a three-part test which must be considered for denial of use:

1. Does the group advocate lawless actions and have the means to carry them out?
2. Does the organization refuse to obey those university rules and regulations which are reasonable?
3. Does the group engage in any acts which disrupt the university or which are themselves lawless?

vance its religious principles, the Court found the benefits gained to be secondary to the preservation of the students' rights of free speech and that the benefit was "incidental." "The record discloses no danger that the University will appear to sponsor any particular religion, and since student participation in the Cornerstone meeting is entirely voluntary, the Court properly concludes that the University's fear (of advancing religion) is groundless." (*Widmar v. Vincent*, p. 280).

The Court also noted in its decision two "relevant factors":

First, an open forum in a public university does not confer any imprimatur of State approval on religious sects or practices. As the Court of Appeals quite aptly stated, such a policy "would no more commit the University . . . to religious goals," than it is "now committed to the goals of the Students for a Democratic Society, the Young Socialist Alliance, or any other group eligible to use its facilities. . . . Second, the forum is available to a broad class of non-religious as well as religious speakers: there are over 100 recognized student groups at UMKC. The provision of benefits to so broad a spectrum of groups is an important index of secular effect. . . . If the Establishment Clause barred the extension of general benefit to religious groups, a church could not be protected by the police and fire departments, or have its public sidewalk kept in repair. (p. 271)

The Court did not issue a *carte blanche* to student groups, however. Echoing the *Healy v. James* decision, the court wrote, "Our holding in this case in no way undermines the capacity of the University to establish reasonable time, place, and manner of regulations." Thus, a university may deny use if the time requested for a meeting disrupts or is outside the regular schedule of the university. It may also deny use of such public areas as lobbies or cafeterias if holding a service there would disrupt normal activity. Finally, the university may assign a space other than that requested if the school feels that to allow the request would interfere with the privacy or tranquility of others.

The courts, however, have not authorized the sponsorship of religious activities by the university. Thus, religious programs advocating a particular religion or religion in general, when such programs are sponsored by a student government, union, or activities program or other official entity, may be interpreted as support to religion and should be avoided.

It is, however, quite legal to sponsor programs which examine values and in which religious lifestyles are compared and contrasted,

as long as the religious lifestyles portrayed are only representative and not encouraged. A program, for example, comparing and contrasting cults with established religious lifestyles would be legitimate because it would educate students about the variety of opportunities for expression.

Although the *Widmar* decision is aimed primarily at state-supported institutions, private universities are also affected. Students do not waive their rights simply because they attend a private university. Mandatory chapel attendance, for example, was ruled unconstitutional in the 1972 case of *Anderson v. Laird* on the grounds of "no establishment" of religion and of "free exercise" (Jones, 1981). While this case was brought to court by a United States Military Academy cadet, the court's ruling may also apply at private schools, as forced participation in religious exercises may constitute a denial of freedom of exercise.

As noted in the Delaware case, "neutrality is a safe harbor." As long as universities treat student groups equally regarding meeting space and support, they are in compliance with court rulings. This advice applies equally to private and state-supported institutions.

How should local chapters or affiliations of national organizations be treated? The Committee for the Advancement of Religious Principles (CARP) has consistently met opposition on college campuses because of its association with the Rev. Sun-Myung Moon. CARP chapters consistently have won court battles which force campuses to accord them the same privileges afforded other student organizations. For example, a chapter chartered in accordance with standard campus procedures and whose purpose states no opposition to university regulations must be recognized. In short, if organizations follow university rules and regulations, they must be allowed to function as they deem appropriate.

In addition, clubs and organizations must be treated individually in regard to their associations with others of a like purpose. The university may encourage and support an interfraternity council, for example, but cannot require membership or involvement in it. The same applies to religious organizations. If Hillel, a Jewish organization, wishes to join the Religious Council composed of leaders from several religious organizations, it may do so. But Hillel cannot

be forced or coerced into becoming involved any more than the Table Tennis Club can be forced to coordinate its activities with the Chess or Archery Clubs. It may be beneficial for the clubs to cooperate and perhaps they should be encouraged to do so, but cooperation may not be mandated (Jones, 1981).

Faith in a god or deity is not a legal requirement for religious recognition. In *U.S. v. Seeger*, people whose beliefs were based only on a "power, being, or faith" were extended protection under freedom of speech regulations.

In addition, *Welsh v. U.S.* established that those whose beliefs are "purely ethical or moral in source and content," if "held with the strength of traditional religious convictions" and not on "consideration of policy, pragmatism, or expediency," have the same rights as those with more traditional beliefs (Jones, 1981).

These court cases have established clear guideposts and discernible lines which are not to be transgressed. Some lines, however, remain blurred. For those of us in higher education faced with the day-to-day demands and pressures of dealing with student organizations, their activities, and general student populations, the large picture is complex. In the next issue of the *Bulletin*, we will examine the implications of various reactions to problems typical of student organizations.

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Religious uses

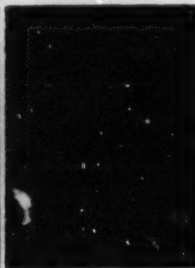
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Religious uses of the college union Whose temple is it?

Part Two

In the October issue, Part One of this series focused on the historical and legal aspects of religion on campus. In this final installment of the series, the authors examine the implications of various reactions to situations involving religious groups.

David E. Johnson and Stephen J. Nelson

Although the courts have clearly established the rights of religious groups to exist on campus, college union and student activities administrators know that not all religious issues have such clearly defined lines. One possible outgrowth of religious involvement is economic boycotts. While certainly not contingent on religious conviction, boycotts often are based on corporate actions considered reprehensible by certain religious organizations. The grape boycotts of the early 1970s, as well as lettuce boycotts and boycotts of Nestle products, were often endorsed by religious organizations, including the World Council of Churches.

When confronted by student demands to support a boycott, union and activities professionals should respond with an open mind and a critical eye. Grapes and lettuce were totally boycotted by many students in the 1970s, for example, under purported encouragement of United Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez. Unfortunately, Chavez wanted us to boycott only those products harvested by non-UFW workers, not all produce. Careful consideration must be taken before a college union endorses a boycott.

But the union should not be afraid to act. By endorsing a boycott, for example, or endorsing increased purchases from minority businesses, the union demonstrates its openness to student opinion. It also dramatically illustrates the need to consider social as well as economic conditions in our lives. Refusal to serve Nestle's Quik during the recent Nestle boycott

probably had little effect on Nestle's massive profits, but it did point out to students that an individual or group of individuals can demonstrate concern about what it finds unacceptable. It also points out the need to examine the world around us and what can be tacit approval for actions taken by companies. By being a "laboratory for citizenship," the union governing boards and management may provide room for experimentation in the social realm.

What if a union chooses not to endorse a suggested boycott? This is certainly an acceptable response when it is chosen in reply to evidence and not simply a standard policy or a desire not to "get involved." Keep discussion of the issue open and note how the decision was reached. Make the campus aware that the union is amenable to such requests, but that it will consider each issue individually, just as it does in other areas.

Another concern may come from more fundamental Christian groups. How does one respond to requests that job candidates have specific religious preferences? How should we respond to the demand that only people expressing faith in Jesus be hired? How do we respond to a request to post the Ten Commandments in the lobby?

As with the boycott issue, we look at these requests as sincere supplications for action and deal with them seriously and individually. Certainly the law prohibits hiring based on religious preference, and except in cases dealing with religious counseling, religious preference has little bearing on the manner in which a per-

son performs his or her duties. This certainly applies also to the request that only Christians be hired.

The request to post the Ten Commandments illustrates the importance of "free expression." If the Commandments are posted, should we also post the teachings of Buddha? Should the tenets of Confucianism be posted in equal prominence? In short, why should the union favor one or two religions over all others which may be espoused by university students?

These issues may be responded to simply by reference to federal, state, or local law or by recent court findings. However, they may also be addressed as issues of general concern, ones which need to be discussed on their own merit. Simply to defer to legal precedent is to let an educational opportunity escape. By deferring, we lose a prime opportunity to make free-time activity an integral part of education.

Another major consideration is the nature and degree of proselytizing and evangelizing religious groups can engage in when they are using a campus facility such as the college union. Though it may be a fine line of distinction, evangelizing is generally a somewhat less aggressive approach to spreading "the word" or "the truth" than proselytizing. Those who evangelize want to convey information about their faith. At times, this can appear as, and often is, a desire to convert the unconverted. Carrying the connotation of being more aggressive, proselytizing includes confronting and encountering potential members or converts, debating, and argu-

ing faith and moral stands in a strong fashion.

Both evangelizing and proselytizing should be distinguished from brainwashing techniques associated with some cults. In these cases, members are sometimes required to give over possessions, profess unaltering allegiance, and fit into the cult regardless of the extent to which the individual becomes a misfit and possibly pathological toward society as a whole. Psychological tactics may be used in evangelizing and proselytizing. Brainwashing is an outright psychological strategy designed to erase

in fund-raising activities without some institutional permission.

As with so many other situations, you are being asked to make a judgment in a rather gray and murky area. Will you reprimand the group, and if so, on what grounds? Where, if at all, has the line been transgressed between the way the campus newspaper might recruit staff members and the way this organization has gone about what it sees as a similar task? Do you automatically think in terms of establishing some policy that might prevent similar occurrences? What are your personal feelings and maybe hang-ups about religion, religious faith, and religious groups? Is it possible to use this as an opportunity to educate all parties involved? Can it be used as a fair warning to this and other religious organizations?

There are probably more questions than answers. In spite of the guideposts provided by the legal system, if you err too far on one side, you may infringe upon religious freedom. On the other hand, we do maintain standards for the use of public spaces without fear of being confronted with an unpleasant situation regardless of the motives of those perpetrating the encounter. The college union should be a free and welcoming space for all who wish to use it. This does not mean that the union won't sponsor controversial programs and activities or that everyone will enjoy everything that goes on. In an analogous way, some states have passed legislation affirming the rights of nonsmokers in public areas and work spaces. Though it may not solve the problem, public welfare may be the criteria used to determine which aggressive religious activity cannot be tolerated.

It is important that we treat students as adults and that we not overprotect them from each other. Even with the lifting of much of the *in loco parentis* approaches of the pre-1960s era, few argue that those involved in policy formulation and the shaping of communities within higher education should stand by and let anything go. At the same time, we do encourage students to accept responsibility for their actions regarding sexuality, alcohol and other drug use, study habits, and recreational and social activity. Although we may not want students to be subjected to outside solicitations in residence halls, a college union, or other campus facility, there are few policies preventing similar activities at most campuses. It may be wise to keep such policies at a mini-

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a person's sense of individuality, former associations and values, and other attachments to the "former" world.

Any of these activities when done to excess, can lead in varying degrees to a conflict of people's freedoms and rights. One person's freedom of religion can conflict with another's freedom of expression. There may also be situations where public welfare demands some constraint of freedom of religion.

To illustrate, consider the following situation: a recognized campus religious organization has received permission to distribute information about its organization in the union lobby at a student activities night or other similar forum. In the process of distributing information, one member attempts to corner some passers-by, forcing literature on them and engaging them in an argument about the necessity of joining the group. A number of those who have been approached feel that the religious organization's member has been offensive and bring their complaint to you, the union director. You have no policy against this type of aggressive evangelizing or proselytizing activity by student groups even though you might have policies against off-campus agencies soliciting students and student groups engaged

num level, especially in the sensitive area of religious expression.

There are, as have been noted above, points at which the freedom of religious expression must be protected. The line separating situations that call for toleration from those that require constraints is a fine one. The line is not static and moves through gray middle ground. When college students graduate, they may face visits and witnessing from members of various cults, sects, and denominations. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are two mainline groups in our society regularly engaging in such activity. Students need to learn how to deal with such situations, participate in dialogue, and express their disagreements. They may also need to learn, even if it is the hard way, that in some situations they may need literally to slam the door in someone's face.

Such situations suggest that another area for involvement in relating to religious groups is the educative role of student activities and college union departments. Today's students can benefit from basic information about religion, religious experience, and especially the major tactics and potential dangers associated with the more aggressive cults and sects located in and around college communities. Student activities and college union administrators should consider active partnerships with the chaplain, campus ministry, and local clergy in developing ways to present such information, formulate referral networks for counseling on religious issues, and set up advisory groups to deal with religious conflicts among groups and individuals. In the hypothetical case of the overzealous member distributing religious literature, such an advisory body could meet with the parties involved to develop some deeper understanding of the issues and passions involved. In so doing, the matter could be handled in an educative and experimental manner rather than through prohibitive and overly protective approaches.

We do have a responsibility to shape and, to a certain extent, control what goes on in our facilities. Religious clubs and organizations are entitled to the same rights as other student groups; our actions and policies should guide, support, and advise them in an equitable and evenhanded manner. There are groups and organizations on our campuses that occasionally, and sometimes regularly, engage in behaviors not allowed in

our facilities. These groups should not be prohibited from using the union or other college facilities for legitimate programs or activities. Likewise, a religious organization with a reputation for questionable tactics should not be denied access for reasonable activities. Further, it is important to avoid overreaction in attempting to constrain activities which appear not to fit normal social patterns. Do we have an answer to the question of what is normal? Can we define normal in a way which allows us to exercise judgment in a non-judgmental way? There is the danger of behaving like the Pharisees and Sadducees who, out of fear, sought to quash new notions and those who held them. We must acknowledge and affirm the diversity and pluralism which have always been part of the American nation.

Finally, to determine our relationship to religious groups, we need to examine what might be called the spiritual role of the college union and the union's concept of space and program. Has the union indeed become a sanctuary on campuses where regular chapel activities have been eroded by the questioning of authority, a drive toward self-fulfillment, and the increasing secularity of our culture? How and when do campus communities gather as many of them did in the era of required chapel? Two years ago on the Dartmouth College campus, the chaplain's office began a program titled "Community Reflections." This was an attempt to have the college community gather at noon once a week to hear a talk on some issue or concern pertinent to the campus, community, or world. The topics included issues of personal philosophy, values, and approaches to living, the arms race, gay rights, and racism.

At first, the activity was scheduled to occur in the college center, but for a variety of reasons, it has been held in the chapel. The notion of holding such an activity in a college union is not that far off the mark. Students who are personally reluctant to enter a traditional sanctuary, such as a chapel, might be willing to attend if the program were in the college union. While the college union is not engaged in ministry *per se*, it can certainly offer ministries. There are sensitive and crucial human issues which need to be discussed. Where do such discussions take place on most campuses? Who is doing the programs? Are they happening at all? Again, a logical approach for the union and

student activities director may be a partnership with campus ministry folks, many of whom spend a great deal of time trying to attract students to their programs and in some cases even to find locations where they can meet and talk with students. Possibly there is a need to return to the coffeehouses of the late 1950s and early 1960s. With a little imagination, we might discover we are the temple, a new kind of sacred space, as always, in the midst of our communities. We might find that we can embrace the task without damaging our goals and that we can, in fact, complement our established Statement of Purpose and goals.

Instead of being frightened or apprehensive about the desire of campus religious organizations to use our facilities, we should welcome this opportunity. It is an occasion to bring in those who may not otherwise use the union and to foster interaction among students. It is also an opportunity to provide an educational function in a caring and compassionate way for students who feel threatened, often rightly so, by the more aggressive and potentially destructive religious cults and groups in our midst. We may, in fact, be a temple of sorts if we are willing to see the open avenues. Religious groups and organizations meet many of the needs of college students. Avoidance on our part creates a vacuum in which these needs may be filled by others in a less healthy, less productive way. By seizing the initiative, assuming a posture of willingness to be involved, we can claim a rightful and mediating role.

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